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ESSAY OF AN ONONDAGA GRAMMAR, OR A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO LEARN THE ONONDAGA *AL.* MAQUA TONGUE.

By Rev. David Zeisberger.

CONTRIBUTED BY JOHN W. JORDAN.

[A minute of a church council, held at Bethlehem 15th July, 1742, recommends the study of the Delaware Indian dialect, in order to facilitate intercourse with individuals of that nation, whose visits to the settlement were then of almost daily occurrence. This was within two years followed by the establishment of a school for the instruction of missionaries in both of the Delaware and Mohawk dialects. The Rev. John C. Pyrlæus was appointed tutor; and among the members of the first class was David Zeisberger, who for upwards of forty years was employed in the Indian mission of his church. This distinguished missionary probably did more than any other man of his time to develop both the Delaware, and the Onondaga dialect of the Iroquois. Fourteen of his manuscripts are preserved in the library of Harvard University, and among those in the Moravian Archives at Bethlehem is his German-Onondaga Lexicon, vii. vols., 2367 pp. We are indebted to the courtesy of the Rt. Rev. Edmund de Schweinitz, S.T.D., for the use of the manuscript and English translation, by Bishop John Ettwein, which we have transcribed to these pages, the original title of which we have also retained.]

§ I.

The Indians have no Characters or Letters of their own, but borrow them from the English, as they did from the Latins.

As they have no Writings or Books & no Schools amongst them, the sound of those Letters is not determined amongst them, the Author of this Essay, being a German, thought it convenient to spell their Words in the German or Latin way, where every letter is pronounced & none needlessly used in their Syllables or Words, according to that, This Tongue has no more than

(a) 21 Letters viz: 5 Vowels: *a, e, i, o, u.*
16 Consonants: *c, d, g, h, j, k, l, n, q, r, s, t, w, u, x, z.*

NOTE. *b, f, m, p & ph* are not usual in their Words, and the Onondagos cannot well pronounce them in the English Words, they turn commonly *p* into *q* & *F* into *W*, *e.g.*

Peter, *Quiter.*
Frederick, *Wredrick.*

They use Diphthongs *ae, ai, ee, ei, eu, ii.*

(b) Pronunciation of the Letters:
a, *awe*, e, *eh*, i, *ih* (not *ei*), o, *u*, *uh* (not *ju*), c before e & i as a *z*, else as a *k.*
g, neither as *J the* nor as *jot*, but as a mild *k.* t, always as *t* (& not *sh*) tho' before i and after that another Vowel, *e.g*, *Jentie* (to come again) as *Jenthie.* *Watidge*, to make water, as *Wathidge.*

§ II.

Accents are 3. Acute, grave & circumflex: the first lies always upon antepenultima or penultima—
the second on ultima—
the third on ultima & penultima.

§ III.

Words are eîther simple or compound. Wachtandi, *to go.* tenta wachtandi, *to go back*, jorke, *to-morrow*—ojantshiorhe, *the Day after to-morrow.*
Ganiatare, *the Sea.* Ganiataregóna, *the open or great Sea.*
either primitives or derivatives Otshishta, *Fire*, tioschischtacherong, *firy.* Ochna, *fat, oil*, ochnara, *fatty, oily.* Ochnecanòs, *water.* ochnecátschi, *watery.*

Parts of Speech or *Partes orationis* are 7. Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adverb, Preposition, Interjection, Conjunction. (the Participle is wanting.)

A) The Noun signifying the Name or Quality of a Thing, is either Substantive or adjective [*Note*]

1.) Substantive the Name of a Thing; as Unque, *Man.* Ganataje, *a Town.* Garōnta, *a Tree.* Johâte, *the way.* Geihuhâte, *the River.*

2.) An Adjective signifies the accident, quality, or Property of a Thing, as: Ojâneri, *good.* Wahétke, *bad.* jos, *long.*

3.) A Substantive Noun is either Proper or Appellative.

a proper Substantive, is in this as in other Tongues, that which agrees to one particular Thing of a kind, as: Onondage, Delaware, Susquehannah, Kaskaskung.

4.) an Appelative Substantive is that which is common to a whole kind of Things, as:

Ganatâje, *a Town.*
Unque, *a Man.*
Geihate, *a River.*
Garonta, *a Tree.*

5.) The Genders are 3. Masculine, feminine and neuter.

The two Genders of Nature, viz. male & female are known by the name or word itself, as:

Etschinak, *a Man.* Echro, *a Woman.* Onogaronto, *a Buck.* Tionhósquarunt, *a Cow.*

Note. They are only declined by Genders & Numbers and have no cases.

2dly by the Præfixis, as: Sajadat, *a male Person.* Sgajadat, *a female Person,* t'hiâtage, *2 persons* (masc.) t'giâtage, 2 *Persons* (femin.), achso nihanati, *3 Persons* (masc.), achso negunati, *3 Persons* (femin.), The præformative *g* is not only used in the females by Nature in the Singular & plural number, as: Echro, *a female* or *Woman, Singul.* Géchro, *plur.* Guntiéchro; but in the plural number, to all cattle & game, where the sexes is not purposely distinguished.

Neuter are all Words which have no Præfixes nor accept any.

6.) The Onondagos have two Numbers as the English: The Singular & plural. the plural number has always a Syllable added to the singular, *e.g.* schóh.

Ganhóchwa, *the Door, pl.* Ganhochwaschóh.
Garonta, *the Tree, pl.* Garontaschóh.
Echro, *a female Woman, pl.* Echroschóh.

2.) nnie. In such words that end with *a, e,* & *o,* & signify Rivers, Hills, Country's, Marshes, Springs, Roads, viz:

Ononta, *the Mountain,* pl. Onontannie.
Geihâte, *the River,* pl. Geihatennie.
Ganiatâre, *the Sea,* pl. Ganiatârennie.
Ganawâte, *the Morass,* pl. Ganawâtennie.
Johâte, *the Way,* pl. Johaténnie.
Jochnawaróto, *the Spring,* pl. Jochnawarotónnie
except: Tiogachrahnte has tonnie.

3.) hogu or ogu,
as: unque, *man,* pl. unquehogu, men, *mankind.*

Garochia, *the Heaven,* pl. Garochiahogu.
Ochnéca, *the Water,* pl. Ochnécahogu.
Otschistenochqua, *the Star,* pl. Otschistenochquahogu.
Achsŏnta, *the Night,* pl. Achsonthógau.
Ozhâta, *the Cloud,* pl. Ozhatahógu.

7.) The Nouns compounded with the adjectives *ios* long, change both the Vowels of *ios* into *es* & in plural *eso, e.g.*

Garonta, a *Tree.*
Garontes, a *long Tree.*
Garontéso, *long Trees.*
Onŏnta, a *Mountain.*
Onontès, a *long Mountain.*
Onontéso, *long Mountains.*

8.) In the proper Nouns where a certain Number is compounded with the final Syllable *age* is added, as:

Ganatâje, *a Town.*
T'ganatage, *two Towns.*
achso ne ganatage, *three Towns.*
gajéri ne ganatage, &c.
Unque, *Man.*
tiunquetage, *two men.*
achso ne unquetage, *three men,* &c.
onochsàje, *the House.*
t'ganochsage, *two houses.*

9.) Declensions of Onondago Nouns and Adjectives, by Cases, are not found except that sometimes the Vocative case in Words beginning with a Vowel is distinguished as

well in the singular as the plural number by præfixing of *S.*, as:

Unque, *Man;* Sunque, *thou man.*
Sunquanis, *thou our God.*
Sajaner, *thou Lord.*
Sunquajaner, *thou our Lord.*

and the Ablative by adding a Præposition, as:

Ochneca, *the Water.*
Ochnecáge, *in the Water.*
garochiáge, *in Heaven.*

10.) *Personæ orationis* are Three, which are expressed by Præfixis, as well in the Nouns as Verbs, as:

giatattige, *my brother.*
tschiatattége, *thy brother.*
hatattage, *his brother.*
pl. unqua or t'watattége, *our brother.*
S'watattège, *your brother.*
hunnatattège, *their brother.*
gehâwak, *my child;* Sahawak, *thy child.*
hehâwak, *his child.*

b.) Adjectives mostly coalesce with the Substantives, as:

Eniage, *the hand.*
Ostwi, *little.*
Eniastwi, *a little hand.*
Ochsita, *the foot.*
goano, *big.*
ochsitowano, *a big Foot.*

1.) They are flexible [declinable] as well as the Verbs they coalesce with the Subst. as:

Wagenckstwa, *my hand is little.*
Saniàstwi, *thy hand is little.*
honiástwi, *his hand.*
gachsitowáno, *I have a big foot.*
sachsitowano, *thou hast a big foot.*
òstwi, *little;* gàstwi, *I am little.*
Sastwi, *thou art little;* hostwi, *he is little.*

2.) Some indeclinable, but have yet the present and future Mood, as:

Agajung, *old;* præs. agajùchne.
orhésta, *white;* præs. orhestachqua.
tiògaras, *dark;* præs. tiogarásqua; fut. 'njogarak, *it will be dark.*

ochnótes, ochnótong, *deep;* præs. ochnotéchqua; fut. 'njochnotong.
otarichè, *warm;* præs. otarichóchqua; fut. 'njotariche.
ios, *long;* præs. iòsqua.
ochranuwe, *wet;* præs. ochquanuwésqua.
Warochiocu, *blew.*
ozitquaroiu, *yellow.*
ochnára, *greasy.*

3.) The indeclinable either coalesce with the Substantives or stand by themselves.

In the first case the singular and plural differ in the last syllable, as:

Garōnta, *the Tree;* and agàjung, *old.*
gàrontagàjung, *an old tree.*
pl. garontagajungschòh.
ase, *new;* garontàse, *a green tree.*
pl. garontaseschòh.
Ochsita, *the foot;* ochsitès, *a long foot;* pl. ochsitéso.

the others make no difference in the singular & plural number, as:

essowa, *many.* Tschióchara, *Pidgeon.*
essowa harriochne Tschiochara.—*He shot many Pidgeons.*
otschiǒnta, *Fish.*
essowa honawichne otschiǒnta.—*He caught many fishes.*
gàhris tiochriro, *torn stockings.*
Hachtáchqua tiochriro, *torn shoes.*

4.) Most of the Adjectives distinguish the masculine and feminine gender, as:

Jonnochwactani, *sick.*
honnochwactani, *he is sick.*
gonnochwactani, *she is sick.*
Unquetahétke, *a bad man.*
hunquetahétke, *he is a bad man.*
gunquetahétke, *she is a bad creature.*
Unquetio, *a good man.*
Junquetio, *he is a good man.*
gunquetio, *she is a good creature.*

5.) a few adjectives of the indeclinable who do not coalesce with the Substantive, make no Difference between the male & female kind, as:

Orhésta, *white.*
tiógaras, *dark.*

Otaté, . . .
Ochnotes, *deep.*
tiochriro, *torn.*
tiodwenóni, *round.*

6.) The Substantive is placed before the Adjective when they do not coalesce, as:

Gazheta tiodwenoni, *a round glass.*
Gáris tiochriro, *stockings torn.*
onaja tiodwenoni, *a ball round.*

But if the Adjective implies the Word *is* or *are* then it goes before the Substantive and the adjective becomes a verb, as:

Tiodwenoni Gazheta, *round is the Glass.*
tiochriro gariċhsa, *torn are my stockings.*

7.) Where two adjectives meet & one coalesce with the Substantive, that which becomes a verb is placed last, as:

Uchwuntschiaquéki tiodwenoni,
the whole World is round.
Uchwuntschiaqueki wahétke,
the whole World is wicked.
Unquequeki hotihétke,
all Men are spoiled.

8.) But where the Substantive & Adjective not coalesce & a verb is added, the Substantive comes in the middle before the Verb, as:

Oqueki unquehogu hotihetke,
all Mankind is spoiled.
Oquéki agozenenschōh gaichéje,
all the cattle died.
Oqueki Zatonochsaje jagoquatos,
His whole family is sick.

9.) Of numeral Adjectives.

a.) *Cardinal.*

1. Skata
2. Tekeni
3. Achso
4. Gajeri
5. Wisk
6. Achiak
7. Tschoatak

8. Tekiro
9. Watiro
10. Wasshè
11. Wasshè skata gachera
12. Wasshè tekeni "
13. Wasshè achso ne gachera
14. Wasshè gajeri "
15. Wasshè wisk gachera
16. Wasshè achiak "
17. Wasshè tshóatak gachera
18. Wasshè tekiro "
19. Wasshé watiro "
20. T'wasshe
21. T'wasshe skata "
30. Achso ne wasshè
40. Gajeri " "
50. Wisk " "
60. Achiak " "
70. Tshoatakè ne wassh
80. Tèkiro " "
90. Watiro " "
100. Wasshè ne wasshè or Skata t'wanniawe
110. Skata t'wanniawe wasshè ne gachero or Skata joshechseróta
120. Skata t'wanniawe tekeni joshechseróta
130. Skata t'wanniawe achso ne joshechseróta
140. Skata t'wanniawe gajera ne "
150. Skata " wisk " "
160. Skata " achiak "
170. Skata " tshoàtek "
180. Skata " tékero "
190. Skata " wátiro "
200. T'wænniawe
300. Achso ne t'wænniawe
400. Gajeri " "
500. Wisk " "
600. Achiak " "
700. Tshoatak ne t'wænniawe

800. Tékire ne t'wænniawe
900. Wátiro " "
1000. Wasshe ne t'wenniawe or ne wænniawechserásshe
2000. T'wænniawechserásshe
3000. Áchso ne wænniawechserásshe
4000. Gajeri " "
5000. Wisk " "
6000. Achiak " "
7000. Tschoátak ne wænniawechserásshe
8000. Tekiro " "
9000. Wátiro " "
10000. Wasshè " "
20000. Twasshè " "
30000. Achso ne wásshe ne wænniawechserásshe
40000. Gajeri " " " "
50000. Wisk ne wásshe ne wænniawechserásshe
60000. Áchiak " " " "
70000. Tshoátak ne " " "
80000. Tekiro " " " "
90000. Watiro " " " "
100000. Wasshè " " " "
200000. T'wænniawe ne Wásshe ne wænniawechserásshe
300000. Achso ne T'wænniawe " "
400000. Gajeri " " " "
500000. Wisk " " " "
600000. Achiak " " " "
700000. Tshoátak ne T'wænniawe" "
800000. Tekiro " " " "
900000. Watiro " " " "
1000000. T'wænniawechserásshe " "

Note 1. Skata & Tekeni coalesce with the Substantive so, that from the first, sk or s is put before & ata or tat at the end of it, as:

Onochsaje, *the House.* Skenochsata, *one House.*
Ganhóchwa, *the Door.* Skanhochwata, *one Door.*
Ojata, *the Person,* Sajadat, *one Person, male,* or Sgajadat, *one Person, female.*

10.) If the initial letter *e*, *i*, or *u*, the *k* is changed into *ch*, with *T* before it or rather *Tsch*, as:

Eniage, *the Hand.* Tscheniata, *one Hand.*
Jóchserat, *the Winter.* Tschióchserat, *one Winter.*
Unque, *Man.* Tschiunquetat, *one Man.*

11.) From Tekeni is only T with an apostrophe or Ti instead of Te put before the Substantive and Syllable age placed at the end instead of another finale, as:

Ganatáje, *the Town*, T'ganatage, *two Towns*, Unque, *man*, Tiunquétage, *two men.* Jochserat, *the Winter*, Tiochserage, *two Winters.*

Note: Use alone can teach where these two words coalesce with the Substantive or not, for if you say: Skata ganhochwa it is plain you mean *one door*, but that is not Onondagish, but Skata ochquari, *one Bear* or Tekeni ochquári, *two Bears*, is proper and not Skochquarat or t'gochquarage. Skata Tachióni & not Skatachionata.

12.) Where Skata & Tekeni do not coalesce with the Substantive, Person or Head is often made use of instead of them, as:

instead of Skáta etchinak, *one Man;* Sajedat Etschinak.
" Skata Echro, *one Woman*, Sgajadat Ethro.
" Tekeni hatitschinak, *two Men;* thiatage hatchschinak.
" Tekeni guntiechro, *two Women;* tgiatagè guntiechro.—but this is only usual with living creatures.

When the Discourse is about Cattle the feminine gender is usually applied, as:

Sgajadat Tionhosquaront, *one Head of Horn Cattle.*
not Sajadat "
Tgiatagè Tionhosquaront
not T'hiatage "

Yet Sgajadat is not so common instead of Skata as t'giatage instead of Tekeni.

13.) The Adjective: many is often expressed by the Substantive, Jotgóte, *a multitude*, as:

Enasquagáte, *many Cattle,*
Unquegotgáte, *many Men,*
Otgoragáte, *many Wampum,*
Ochwistágate, *much money.*

b. *Ordinals.* Upon the question: Tohniwathonta?
Is it the first, second, &c.

Tistiérechte, *the first.*
Tekeniwathōnta, *the second.*
Áchsowathōnta, *the third*
Gajeri " *the fourth, and so forth.*

To these belong also the numerals when in measuring & weighing one ½ or ¼ is above a whole sum, as:

Wisk (*5*) Satewachsænewathōnta (½) i.e. *5½, five & a half.*

T'wasshe (*20*) Satewachsænewathōnta (½) i.e. *twenty & one half.*

c. *Multiplicatives*, are none in this Tongue, they are expressed by Ordinals, as:

Tekeni Zanihuntiatóte, they are of a (double) two fold kind (or Gender)

Achso (*3*) ne tiohátie (*ways*)—three different ways (Roads), gachschirowáno (cord, rope) gajeri ne gachschirage (of 4 threads)—a fourfold rope or cord.

Achso ne tiojéki, *thrice divided*—⅓.

Gajeri ne tiojáki, *4 times divided*—¼

d. *Distributives.* Upon the question Tohnihatti? how many each time? as:

Skataháttie, *each 1.*
Tekeniháttie, " *2.*
Achsoháttie, " *3.*
Gajeriháttie, " *4.*
Wiskháttie, " *5.*

T'wasshehátie wahojaki—*he gave each 20.*

Wasshehátie tionquanonta—*Ten has been given to each of us.*

e.) *Proportionals.* Upon the question: tohni gáchera Zaniocht agoja? *how many more than the other?* are expressed by Cardinals, they say either *e.g.*

Achso ne wágie—*I have 3*
Achiak hóje—*he has 6, or*

Óras netoniung hoje zaniocht ne J—*he has as much again as I have.*

Tekeni netoniung—*twice as much.*

Achso netoniung—*thrice as much.*

f.) *Temporals* are partly expressed by Cardinals, partly by compounds of Cardinals & Substantives, as:

Upon the question: tóhni Jochseráge? *How many years? or how old?*

Jochseràt—*the winter.*

Tshióchserat—*one year or winter.*

Tiochserage—*two years.*

Achso ne jochserage—*three years.*

Tiochserásshe—*twenty years.*

Achso ne jochserasshe, *thirty years.*

Gajeri " " *forty years.*

S'wechnítat, *one month old or long.*

Twechnitage, *two months.*

Àchso ne weshnitage, *three months.*

T'wechnitásshe, *twenty months.*

S'wæhntàt, *one day.*

T'gawàntage, *two days.*

Àchso ne wahntage, *three days, and so forth to 20.*

there is more proper to say—

T'wachsontásshe, *twenty Nights.*

Àchso ne wachsontasshe, *thirty nights.*

Gajeri " " *forty nights instead of days.*

Upon the question: how often? They answer by Cardinals, as:

Wasshe ne Wasshe, *ten times ten.*

(To be continued.)